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SUBJECT: PREPARATIONS FOR PHASE 1 VOTER REGISTRATION

¶1. (SBU) Provincial staff of the Independent Elections Commission (IEC) are making tentative progress in preparing for the October 6 start date for Phase 1 voter registration, according to the reports of PRT field officers in Kapisa, Bamiyan, Panjshir, and Parwan. Kapisa, Bamiyan, and Parwan have hired the final level of field staff, the District Field Coordinators (DFCs), and planned to begin DFC training in coordination with UNDP/ELECT field officers September 1. The provincial office in Kapisa optimistically estimates that the DFCs will need a week, or less, to verify the planned voter registration sites, a key step that will facilitate security and logistics planning. The IEC in Kabul reports that poor security is hampering efforts to hire local staff in Ghazni and Wardak, especially in areas dominated by ethnic Pashtuns.

Despite recruitment through appeals on radio and TV and from prominent local figures, two of Ghazni's 18 districts have no DFC applicants, according to IEC headquarters and provincial officials.

VOTER OUTREACH

¶2. (SBU) Kapisa and Panjshir provincial electoral officers have begun to plan for voter outreach campaigns, including incorporating civic and voter education into weekly mosque sermons. IEC headquarters began training provincial-level civic educators on August 30 and expects district-level civic educators to start voter outreach campaigns September 15. In recent meetings with the USG, the governors of Nuristan and Kunar expressed their support for elections and underscored the importance of voter outreach and education. The two governors, like district governors in Panjshir and Ghazni and the Ghazni provincial electoral officer, opined that the degree of difficulty of travel -- whether the obstacle is distance or security -- will be key in shaping citizens' decisions to register and vote. Spot interviews with residents in rural areas suggest that, with voting day almost a year away, everyday concerns outweigh the distant prospect of elections.

SECURITY PLANNING

¶3. (SBU) Excepting Parwan, IEC provincial staff have yet to begin formal interactions with other sub-national government

elements. Governors, provincial councils, and district governors have no formal role in voter registration, but many say they would like to be consulted. In particular, only in Parwan have provincial IEC staff begun to work with the police and army to discuss voter registration security planning. The signing of the Joint Security Order between MOI, MOD, and ISAF on August 24 was a significant step forward and opens the door for improved coordination at the sub-national level. Additionally, as the ANP and ANA regional and corps commanders begin to prepare to deliver detailed plans to their commanders in the second week in September, this situation may improve.

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